

mens of *Strophosomus melanogrammus* (Forster) on the ground at the base of some young plants of Sheeps Sorrel; which were growing on very sandy soil by the side of an old cart track. This second site is about three kilometers from the sea.

Perhaps *P. plagiatus* is well established at these two sites and it would be interesting to discover what it feeds on in inland situations. The weevil is normally associated with Marram Grass, but may well be a more general feeder, at least in the adult stage. I have found the weevil on a number of occasions on the shore between Seascale and Ravenglass on the following plants: Sheeps Sorrel and Common Sorrel, Creeping Thistle, Curled Dock and Sea Mayweed. Hoffmann, (1950, *Faune De France.*, 52 (Coleopteres Curculionides, 1: 376) mentions that in France *P. plagiatus* appears to be polyphagous and has been found feeding on the leaves of Broom, (*Sarothamnus scoparius*) and is sometimes a pest of vines. — R. W. J. READ, 43 Holly Terrace, Hensingham, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 8RF.

THE PAPERS AND ENTOMOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS OF CHARLES P. ALEXANDER (1889-1981) AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. — Dipterists will wish to know that the materials of this legendary student of the Tipulidae have been acquired by the Smithsonian Institution. In his lengthy and informative 1982 obituary, George W. Byers suggested that "when Alexander began his work on the crane flies, there were perhaps 1500 species known world-wide. The species he named and described constitute three-fourths of this now enormous family of 14,000 species, largest among the Diptera. It seems improbable that one man ever before so dominated the development of the taxonomy of so large a family" (*J. Kansas Entomol. Soc.* 55: 409-417). Alexander's correspondence, collecting records, research data, diaries, photographs and miscellaneous papers, which occupy 60 shelf feet, are now being organized and catalogued in the Smithsonian Archives, and a register will eventually be produced. Inquiries about these materials should be directed to the Deputy Archivist, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. Alexander's immense and authoritative collection of specimens and microscope slides was conveyed shortly before his death, and is now in the Department of Entomology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. — RONALD S. WILKINSON, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, New York 10024.

ALARM RESPONSE IN LARVAE OF *DIURNEA FAGELLA* D. & S. — Whilst examining some small larvae which turned out to be those of *Diurnea fagella* in Worcestershire in 1983, I was surprised by their vigorous and quite complicated alarm responses. When their spinings were opened up these small larvae tended to "stand their ground" and when challenged by the apex of a pair of forceps responded by raising the head and the first two thoracic segments from the leaf and at the same time drumming vigorously with the

third pair of legs on the surface of the leaf. This produced quite a noticeably audible sound especially on a hard leaf such as oak. The text books report the third pair of legs to be inflated like "boxing gloves" in this genus, but I have not seen any comment as to the function of this feature.

On examination the terminal segment of the third pair of legs, although rounded and inflated dorsally has an anvil shaped downward projecting point with a short hard tip. This seems to be designed to be struck against the leaf during the drumming movements which are very rapid. So rapid that the third pair of legs becomes "a blurr". Although the head also is raised up aggressively towards the challenge no obvious fluid was seen escaping from the mouth. When the larvae were larger they tended to be more inclined to wriggle off backwards rather than responding by drumming but if sufficiently provoked or when cornered they also would drum quite loudly on any hard substratum such as an oak leaf or the plastic lid of a container.

I imagine this alarm response would be to deter a predator, perhaps a small bird or more probably an insect predator such as a predatory bug. Also, however, when a number of these larvae were artificially placed into a new container they could be heard rattling and drumming away whenever one of their number came too close, and certainly in captivity this seemed to keep them apart on their food plant. — Dr. A. N. B. SIMPSON, 29 Greenway, Collets Green, Powick, Worcester.

PERIDEA ANCEPS GOEZE: TREPIDA ESP. (GREAT PROMINENT) IN NOVEMBER. — On the 8th November 1983, my brother Michael and myself spent the evening near Sixpenny Handley, Dorset with the aid of a m.v. light successfully locating *Ptilophora plumigera* (Plumed Prominent). After the appearance of six *P. plumigera*, we were much surprised at the arrival on the sheet of a fresh *Peridea anceps*. — E. G. SMITH, Bullen Hill Farm, Ashton Common, Trowbridge, Wilts. [This would seem to be a case of a second generation specimen of *anceps*, though we are only aware of one other such example on record. On the 7th October 1977, Dr. H. G. Parker captured a worn male of this species near Builth Wells, Breconshire, which specimen we have seen. — EDITOR].

THE LONG-TAILED BLUE: LAMPIDES BOETICUS L. IN SOMERSET. — As recorder of lepidoptera for the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society, I have received the following note from Mr. L. A. Haldane of Staple Fitzpaine, Somerset: "Undoubtedly my most interesting find was *Lampides boeticus* (The Long-tailed Blue). This alighted on a leaf near me in the forestry on the Blackdowns above our house on 7th August 1983. I had a very good, close look at it, the underside is unmistakable and it is well known to me from East Africa where it is common." — B. W. MOORE, F.R.E.S., Church Cottage, Church Lane, Batheaston, Bath.